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School psychology students take home awards at state conference

October 31, 2017



School psychology graduate students (l-r) Courtney Smith, Jessica Miller and Brittney Summerville

Three graduate students enrolled in the school psychology program at Georgia Southern University's College of Education claimed all student awards given during the 47th annual Georgia Association of School Psychologists (GASP) fall conference in Jekyll Island, Georgia held Oct.16-18.

Candidates in the [Ed.S. School Psychology](#) program, Courtney Smith, Brittney Summerville and Jessica Miller all received recognition for their strong academic performance as well as dedicated service in the School Psychology Student Association (SPSA).

Smith and Summerville both received the GASP's Christine Daley School Psychologist Student Scholarship. Given to students majoring in school psychology in a Georgia program, this \$1,000 scholarship is awarded during the internship year of a program. Recipients of the award were selected based on academic success in their graduate program, leadership experience, strong recommendations from professors and a desire to contribute to the school psychology field in the state of Georgia.

Courtney Smith earned a bachelor's in early childhood education from Georgia Southern and taught kindergarten for three years in the Savannah-Chatham County Public School System before returning to the University to enroll in the school psychology program. She currently serves as a student representative for Georgia Southern on the executive board of the Georgia Association of School Psychologists, as well as a representative of the College of Education on the University's Graduate

Student Organization Council, and a committee member on the Picturebook Selection Committee for the Georgia Children's Book Awards.

"These funds will allow me to continue my pursuit of a career as a school psychologist supporting my ultimate goal of tailoring education for diverse learners," Smith said. "As a former public school teacher, I am incredibly proud of our state organization for taking the initiative to support efforts such as this scholarship that aim to retain the best talent in our field for service to the children of Georgia. I cannot wait to continue serving the children of our state and advocating for them in this new role upon graduation."

Brittney Summerville is completing a yearlong internship with Hall County School System in Gainesville, Georgia. A former executive board member of the SPSA, she is also a member of the GASP and National Association of School Psychology (NASP). Summerville is expected to graduate in spring 2018.

"As a recipient of the scholarship it is an honor to be recognized as an outstanding student and professional among my peers," said Summerville. "I am passionate about assisting students with academic, emotional and behavior needs, and I am dedicated to serving as an advocate for these students."

Jessica Miller was named the GASP's School Psychology Student of the Year. Currently interning in Douglas County School System (DCSS), Miller is in her final semester of the school psychology program at Georgia Southern.

"It was such an honor to be nominated by one of my professors, Dr. Terry Diamanduros, and to also receive a letter of support from my internship supervisor, Nancy Schusterman," said Miller. "I am humbled to be recognized by such wonderful individuals and to accept this honor from the Georgia Association of School Psychologists. Receiving this accolade was the perfect culmination to my graduate career at Georgia Southern University."

Miller has served as a graduate assistant for the school psychology program and was one of the co-founders of the University's School Psychology Student Association (SPSA). She is also a member of both the GASP and NASP. In February, Miller was a co-author with COE's school psychology faculty on a presentation at the NASP conference in San Antonio.

The Georgia Association of School Psychologists strives to provide school psychologist in the state of Georgia with the highest level of support and professional training to enable them to remain effective in a dynamic educational environment. GASP is the only state professional organization representing the field of school psychology and provides valuable resources to their members including research opportunities, PLU hours, NCSP credits, regional and local workshops, and conferences.

To learn more about a career in school psychology and the Ed.S. in School Psychology degree program, visit <https://coe.georgiasouthern.edu/espy>

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COE faculty and alumna receive national research and scholarship award

October 31, 2017



Charles Hodges, Ph.D.

Each year, the [National University Technology Network](#) (NUTN) recognizes the significant contributions of individuals advancing applications of technology to teaching and learning in higher education.

Charles Hodges, Ph.D., an associate professor of [instructional technology](#), and Georgia Southern University College of Education Alumna Rachel Harris (Counselor Education, '16) were named the 2017 recipients of the NUTN Research and Scholarship Award for their published article, "[Using Google Tools for Online Coursework: Student Perceptions.](#)"

The Research and Scholarship Award presented by NUTN is given to an individual or multiple individuals who have engaged in significant new research with implications for the field of distance learning and the use of technology as a delivery mechanism in higher education.

The award-winning article, published in a 2016 edition of *IEEE Transactions on Emerging Topics in Computing*, was based on Hodges' teaching experience in a special topics course taught during three consecutive summer semesters. Harris and Hodges evaluated the use of Google Sites and Google+ in place of traditional learning management systems (LMSs) for the online graduate coursework including information presentation and discussion.

Implications included an improved interactivity and positive participant response when using the Google platform. Students also reported easier access to course materials from mobile and tablet devices.

Hodges explained that LMSs can be costly and not all teachers, especially those in K-12 schools have access to those tools. Google tools, however, are available at no cost.

“I believe that it is important to model the use of tools that teachers can access so they can see how they might offer classes, or portions of classes, online when they do not have access to large Learning Management Systems,” he said. “Since this research was finished, Google has been providing Google Classroom, which makes it even easier for teachers to do what I was doing in the classes that were studied for this research.”

Hodges and Harris were presented with a glass memento in recognition of the award.

Harris, now a program coordinator for a grant funded veterans project and clinical counselor in Savannah, said that the research experience she gained while a graduate student at Georgia Southern has assisted in preparing for her career and future research.

“I feel it’s important for graduate students to collaborate with faculty members because it provides growth opportunities to publish outside of traditional program structure (dissertations, etc.) and avenues to grow professionally through qualitative, collaborative feedback,” she explained. “My [assistantship] experience helped me to gain traction in the research community, and I continue to grow in this skill set completing veterans affairs research through the Medical University of South Carolina as well as working toward independent research aimed to improve the counseling profession.”

Hodges and Harris agreed that the recognition serves as motivation in their research efforts.

“My aim always is to produce good work, and getting external recognition and validation for it is a real bonus, especially when the work was done with a student,” Hodges said. “Getting this award from a national organization like the National University Technology Network that is focused on higher education teaching and learning, especially with emerging technologies, is exciting.”

“Being published and winning awards for the work we’ve done helps to further motivate me to continue my efforts toward additional research and publications because I can see that it makes a difference and helps others,” added Harris.

For more information about the National University Technology Network, visit <http://www.nutn.org/>

Georgia Southern University offers graduate degrees in instructional technology programs at both the master’s and specialist levels. For more information about our instructional technology programs, visit <https://coe.georgiasouthern.edu/itec/>

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